

Bill: Well they were all pretty much what you would call class people. We didn't have any grubbies or any scum bags or anyone that was exploitive at all. All of these fellows that were associated together were very conscious of the wilderness and very conscious of preserving the mountaineering environment. We were very careful about cleaning roots and stuff like that, long before people were writing articles about it. We just believed that that was the way to do it. And we also were the type of people that were multipliers, that is were teachers, and when you go back into your community you project your personality over about 200 captive people all the time, for starters. You had to remember too back in those days anybody who was a climber was kind of considered an oddball in the community, and so you got asked to go to Rotaries and lions clubs and town clubs and places like this to talk about your experiences because they were odd experiences, they were unique experiences in those days. Now everybody does it, so who wants to hear about your climb anywhere anymore, because it is so common place now, but 40 years ago it was not. You were local entertainment.

Jean: Was it because you were all so odd, to other people, really the group was an eclectic, maverick bunch, was that difficult to all be together like that? Did that make things difficult and do you think it would have been difficult for Glenn to be a leader of that kind of a group.

Bill: Yeah, it would have been for Glenn, because Glenn was not an assertive individual until you put a rope into his hand and then there was a personality transformation that was a little bit alarming. But in his role as the head of the guide concession he was very calm, very peaceful and conservative leader, which is exactly what that place needed.

Jean: You needed someone to almost ground you.

Bill: yeah, and somebody that could take a lot of harassment, cause these guides were a pretty high powered bunch. Jesus, if you get guys like Unsoeld Corbet and Miriam chewing on you, you have your hands full.

Donnie: I was just thinking that there might be another difference, too. specifically to that question. I remember Bill talking about the difference between the guides there and what they did on their spare time, which was climb, and the guides who worked for outward bound who also wanted to climb in their spare time but they wanted to be paid in their spare time. They wanted Outward Bound to pay them for practice climbs, reconnaissance as opposed to the earlier, well lets just go out and see this route.

Bill: We were doing it because we were absolutely in love with the mountains, and the business of being there, and just having that rock in your hands, whereas 20 years later, my people at Outward Bound want to get paid for everything. I mean, the glamour and the excitement and thrill that we enjoyed for just being up there was not in these guys, they were on a payroll.

Jean: Well was it glamorous? When I look back it seems very glamorous to me. But was there a sense during the 40s and 50s of the glamour?

Bill: No.

Jean: No. You weren't aware of what you were doing for the country or the world.

Bill: No, no not at all we were just a bunch of characters who thrived on being up there.

Jean: And I know that Glenn had a lot of integrity.

Donnie: There's some glamour and pride expressed in that picture [she shows a picture from his office]

Bill: [he describes the scene. This is paul duver and Leroy McDuffy, now they were two friends of mine from Salem and they were Shamakavans. And these guys, now these two fellows they didn't have to climb the Matterhorn to have a good time, they could have an equally good time climbing three-fingered Jack.

which involved one rope-length if at all. And when they came to the Tetons they were absolutely awed by those mountains. back in those days, when was this, 1957, August 9, 1957. And at that time, these were the two oldest guys ever to climb the Grand, and I took them up there.

Jean: Oh, that is a great photo.

Bill: Aren't they neat.

Jean: [reading] Paul Deuver, born 1883, and Leroy Duffy, born 1885, Grand Teton Climb, Aug. 9, 1957. This is wonderful. Wasn't So this is a painted photograph? yeah, Paul did the painting. This is great I would love to reproduce that for the book possibly,

Bill: Oh, sure, anyway.

Jean: they look so thrilled with themselves.

Bill: Oh they were absolutely great, they were just great on the climb. I had five people on that climb, and these were the two best climbers, they were much better than the younger folks.

They had climbed around here too,so they were in shape but even though, the elevation.

Oh the elevation was a killer, but Paul and leroy came back two weeks ahead of time, and they hiked to amphitheater and surprise, they hiked cascade canyon, they hiked death canyon, they got conditioned.

Jean: Do you feel that one of , what was it about Glenn that his leadership over the guide school allowed the profession to become what it was. What do you think were the qualities?

Bill: Well, Glenn was open, uh, a lot of us criticized Glenn because he didn't change anything or didn't seem to, but actually when you consider the changes the guy went through, he changed a lot. During the time that Glenn had the concession the climbing

techniques changed, I mean my word, when he started he hadn't even heard of vibram!. and uh, the boots changed, the shoes changed, we first started climbing with manilla rope.

Jean: Is that just uh, like twine?

Bill: Yeah, that's all there was, and the only pitons a guy could get, like Paul made his own out of railroad spikes, he pounded em out, and the only pitons we had were the ones we imported from Europe through REI and no less through the Dartmouth Coop in the East, the only place you could get em, and the carabiners were none of this stuff today. It was pretty risky stuff, so the climbing techniques changed along with the development of the equipment and hose were the most dramatic years i think, from the 50s through the 70 with the development of the equipment, and the fact is, with the you know the increase, the phenomenal increase in the use of the outdoors in the same period of years required changes in the kind of instruction that you gave, because it became, when we first started climbing nobody even thought of climbing routes because nobody else is coming up here. There's nobody coming up here. You'd get up to symmetry spire, for instance, when Willie and I did that first, the Unsoeld ridge on Symmetry spire, you know we got up there and we'd done the durrance and the underhill, and the chimney, the big chimney there I don't know what it is called anymore, and Unsoeld said there's another ridge over here, i said willie you're nuts, there isn't another ridge over here, we've done everything on this side of the mountain

well then lets climb between em , there's got to be another route up this thing. Then the next thing we did three or four attempts at climbing in between the routes, climbing he faces in between em, and came back down and you know we were up there we stayed overnight in the saddle, around the what's that other little mountain there, either storm point Ice point! camped around Ice point, and then Symmetry. But see, we stayed up there two whole days experimenting around different routes and never saw a sole.

Oh, see we climbed baxters three weekends ago and there were two , we were on two ropes and this poor party that came below

us, they were so disappointed, and that happens. and this was in May, so already we were all just local people, not just travelling there for the summer.

Yah, and May! That's incredible, see.

yeah, and the boat wasn't operating. We had to walk around the lake. Not that that was a difficult walk, but usually that deters people. So you could pioneer new routes though.

yeah, everything we did was a new route, or a lot of the things, well all you had to do was point up and you had a new route. Then when I was back with my daughter Terry, see daughter Terry in here, This was just a couple of years ago, well, about five years ago. My oldest daughter had never climbed the grand, and I didn't realize it. She'd always worked at the Elbow ranch, which is gone now, but I forgot that Terry'd had always worked over at the Elbow and every time we'd schedule a climb up the grand she always had to work. And she called me five or six years ago now and said, [mock whining] Dad, I'm the only one that's never been up there.

Jean: Do you have four kids?

Bill: Yeah four of mine and then two of Donnie's which we've put together. Oh, I was going to say, when I went back to do this climb with Terry, I went up to Symmetry Spire and I had to sit around for two hours to wait for a chance to get on the rock, there were so many parties.

Jean: What about seniority. Couldn't you just go up ... Did you do any climbing in Nepal or any of the big mountain peaks or did you mainly stay with rock climbing.

Bill: yeah I did I was the alternate for the K2 expedition. Art Gilkey and I did the match stick thing, so I went to Rainier and trained with them and all that and then Gilkey drew the short one so he went and of course he died over there. He was killed in an avalanche But that is the closest I ever got to Karakoram.

Jean: What year was that?

Bill: Uh, 54 I think was the expedition, yeah.

Jean: What was it like living on Guide's hill? And did Beth look out for all the Bachelors and cook em meals.

Bill: No, Beth was always very generous that way, for instance if you got down late off the mountain, she'd say like it Pownall came in late or any of us, she'd say, have you eaten? No okay eat with us then. But no, she didn't cook regularly.

Jean: WERE they sort of. Jeff, Al read told me, well this was maybe later, but they said there were all these single guys hanging out, chasing women, Did that appall the Exums do you think, or did they maybe not know what was going on.

Bill: No, they didn't know what was going on.

Jean: What was it like living with families on Guide's hill?

Bill: Well it was kind of fun, you had to have a certain kind of woman to appreciate that environment and Joanne was excellent when i first went out with her Joan loved it out there. We had our tent house and our little kid tent house along side it, you know I've got thousands of old slides but we don't have the time to fuss around with those, and I had always lived, I'd spent most of my life in the out doors anyway so it was nothing new to me, we made our refrigerators and we kept cottonwood creek clear, we didn't throw any garbage anywhere and everything was really clean in that respect, and we all had cars or most of us did, and we were right there together

Jean: wasn't it an interesting community to be around?

Bill: Oh yes, it was fascinating. Course these were guys that were all interesting guys, there are all well educated people, and I built all the tent houses to start with , and then the guides,

yeah, yeah, I built all the platforms.

Jean: Wood platforms, canvas

Bill: then we took the canvas off, and they just filled up with snow in the winter and you had to repair them and move in again the next spring.

Jean: Would they have walls?

Bill: Up to the five foot level. I built the board walls up to the five foot level so that you could have shelves and stuff, and then the canvas you'd use, the tents you had to conform to the tents and you had five foot walls so the break in the tent was right at the five foot level, on the side, so I built the walls up to five foot then built the rafter on so the guide would spread his canvas at the top. And strap your refrigerator to the side so the bears couldn't haul it off.

Jean: Yeah bears frequented that area, didn't they.

Bill: yeah. laughs] the summer that Dave Dingman and his friend were out there, dave was a surgeon you know, then he was in medical school and he ended up as the doctor on everest later on. Well dingman, Hah, hah, dingman and his buddy, at the time there was a bear, a big black bear, terrorizing Corbet's tenthouse, and he had just married muffy. Muffy was a real good sport, but my gosh she was you know, this damned bear was tearing her, he would just come up and take her refrigerator and tear it off the tent house, damn near tore the tent house down, they're so strong, and he'd rip open the refrigerator and muffy would yell and I'd come over with a flashlight and run the bear off and you know they didn't stay away for more than an hour, and he'd be back again. And we got really tired of this, and we'd tell the park and two weeks'd go by and we'd go through this every night and Corbet be ready to be tied and muffy was a nervous wreck, well the Park never showed up with a trap. So Corbet came over to me and he said, we've got to shoot that goddamned bear or I'm going to get a divorce. So I went up to the Jenny Lake store and borrowed, the guy that ran the store, I forgot his name, but he had an elephant

gun, and old, a 20/52 elephant gun octagon barrel that had been used to hunt elephants in Africa. They were big. And he said here Byrd take this goddamned thing down there you can't miss. And he gave me five shells. So, that night we parked all our cars like this around Corbet's tent. About here from the street, but in a big semicircle and waited for this bear. and so the bear came, and I shot the bear - it only took one round, and the thing just went, becoow. I mean it blew a whole in it that big, so we shot the bear, and then Dingman and his buddy, put the bear right next to Oppie's little shack right there in the middle of the housing compound and started to skin him out, interested in the anatomical, so the rest of us went to bed, we thought oh you two idiots do what you want to but get rid of the bear before daylight because we're in rouble with the park. And we didn't tell Exum anything about this, and he didn't hear the shot! Nope, well I was aiming at Jenny lake right into the hillside because I didn't want that bullet to go anywhere

Jean: Especially since all your cars were around. I would think that that would have been a pretty loud blast.

Bill: Oh yeah, Mann McCain heard over in the boat place, Mann came up over the hill and hollered, what the Hell's going on Byrd? Why always me, why don't you fellas ell at Pownall. Mann said what's going on. he said did you shoot that son of a bitch bear and I said yes "Oh god, good!

Bill Byrd interview June 7, 1994, tape two, sides A and B:

JW Joanne was telling me the kids used to drive down and make signals to you when you were on the Grand.

BB: Oh, yeah, I had an army signal mirror, and Joanne would take the kids to the driveout down there on the Jenny Lake Drive and when I got on top which was usually around ten o'clock, why I'd signal her uh, either everything was okay or if we had any emergencies why that was a good way because we had our codes

made up, morse codes.

JW: You left to go into the Peace Corp? uh huh

BB: When the Peace Corp act was passed [and that was in] 1962.

Jean: You guided all through the 1950s, except for 52 when you got married. When did you get married?

Bill: 54, Hah!

Jean: And then you continued to guide and started having children and they would come there to stay during the summers.

Bill: Well, one of our clientele at the Exum school was Bob Macnamara, who was Kennedy's secretary of defense, so when the Peace Corp act was passed, you have to remember Kennedy had a hell of a time with congress. He got nothing through Congress in 1961. About the only act that was actually passed was the act that started the Peace Corp. Well, Kennedy got a small staff together and essentially said now we got to do something. The thing was planned along the lines of operation crossroads Africa, it had been running for, Jim Robinson, the reverend Robinson had been doing that for oh five or six years, and this was Sargess model for the Peace Corp, the only model around, and the main worry that they had was taking an American kids out of this lush environment of ours, this crazy culture of ours and plopping them down in south america or africa and they'd bolt and come home and it would be an absolute bust, and so Kennedy says, no these kids have to succeed (chuckles) and so, how do we train em? Well, Jim Robinson of course was very helpful, you know, he wanted the thing to succeed, even though it was competitive with his operation [but he was only in Africa] That's right, and on a very very small scale, like 20 people a year, a very small thing, but really well done.

And so the pressure was on for the Peace Corp to succeed. I don't care what you have to do, but this thing's got to work. So, how do we train them.

And Josh Minor, had started the Colorado Outward Bound school at

the same time, borrowed the Outward Bound school from Britain.

So they invited Josh Minor to come in and tell them about this thing called Outward Bound, and Shriver said, that should be part of the training for the Peace Corp volunteers with modifications. This gives us a chance to see what they are made of, when you talk about -- what are you talking about sarg, I'm talking about character. Are they coming in to this thing to fail or are they coming into this thing to succeed. Who the hell are these people? Something to determine if they've got it to last there overseas for two years, if they've got sticktoitiveness, do they have any initiative, do they have any resourcefulness do they have perseverance, you know, these are the things that are going to be most important to these people, I don't care what your training is, but their qualities of character are going to make the difference whether you succeed or you fail, because their jobs over there are going to be simple as hell, it is going to be underneath their skill level. Will they stay, and will they relate to these people? These are the key things we'll have to find out and you can't find these things out on a college campus where everybody's is comfortable, you all have your avenues of ely retreat all maid out, you all have it memorized, you've got 17 years of cultural baggage you have to get rid of, now how do we do that? This Outward Bound thing sounds like the way that we do it!

So, then Si says, who teaches this in the U.S. And minor says, "We don't have anybody. We just opened up the school in colorado and we don't have anybody yet!

Jean: The climbers were the only people who

Bill: Yeah, and climbing was a part of the mountaineering outward bound school, the overseas [?] schools of course, why they all used climbing as one of the challenges. So then you got to remember there weren't very many climbers in the country yet. So Josh said, where the hell do they climb in this country, beside these gunks and this little place we have here behind Washington. [may have said Mt. Washington]

Well, the Tetons, the Exum- Petzoldt School of mountaineering, I better go out there. So he came out there, and he talked to Reader, well he talked to everybody but Al, you know, Reader and I were the only ones that sort of responded to the thing, and I didn't know, I thought Rock Climbing in Puerto Rico? This guy is out of his gourd.

JW: Why Puerto Rico?

BB: Because, Amelious Marine was president of Puerto Rico at the time and he was a good buddy of - and the Kennedy's. Friendly environment, cheap place to train, and the U.S. military owned 60 percent of the damn island, so we had "support" Ooh, great! All we needed was the damned military hanging around the place! That is why they picked Puerto Rico and besides it made sense for the volunteers headed for South America to go through a Latin culture along the way, and Muno said we can put em in the slums of bayamar, we can put em in the cane fields, we can put em wherever you what, you know, its not gonna be too much different. But, then, we had to figure out the training program. We had to adapt to a Puerto Rican environments. Well Minor, Josh came out and talked to Al Read and I and some of the other guys, and Reader decided he would try it in the oh season, hah hah, hah, you know, Al's always been single, and he was ready to go anytime.

Jean: How did Al's nickname come about?

Bill: I just called him that.

[Jean's side note - Al's real nickname was Reader the Breeder, names thus because he was quite the romeo.]

Jean: What was your nickname?

Bill: I don't think I had one?

Jean: They didn't call you it to your face.

Bill: My name didn't lend itself to a nickname. I don't know that everybody called Al Reader, but once in a while we did, I still do it unconsciously.

Jean: So Al wasn't married to Jennifer?

Bill: He wasn't married to Jennifer, no. We didn't think we'd every get Reader married! had, hah, anyway, so Al went down there ahead of me, and he called and said Byrd you need to come down here because I'm leaving and there is no body else coming in to do this phase of the program

Jean: Were you teaching the Outward Bound program and were you teaching climbing like you would at Exum?

Bill: I was going down there to teach like we did at Exum's because I didn't know what this Outward Bound thing was, and I was teaching school at Mackenzie.

[we discuss Mackenzie, fly fishing]

Bill: Yes, we just got off this Sunday. I used to guide the river.

Jean: So you taught history?

Bill: Yeah, I taught history and social studies and I was assistant principal at the highschool. And this was in November and Bob Macnamaura called me at school, and set the school in an uproar because here was Washington DC calling me... What the hell has Byrd done now, its just the reaction, I don't know why but

Jean: Yeah you are always held responsible. I'm seeing a theme here.

Bill: And mac of course was the bully into the theme of the Kennedy's, you know, everything had to be done yesterday. And I got on the phone and said, Mac I was right in the middle of a class, fortunately we had a lot of fun up there, the teacher next door, I said hay, ---- I gotta go down to the office can you take

my class too? Okay. I go down to the office and Macnamara's on the phone and he says Byrd can you get back here tomorrow morning

I said Mac for christ's sake I'm teaching school, its in the middle of november, I can't just walk off the job, and I couldn't get back there tomorrow anyway. What in the hell for? He said well we've got to set up this outward bound training program and i said, what, outward what.

Outward Bound its a character training program from Britain. We gotta use it in the Peace Corp. The what? The Peace Corp. Oh, Peace Corp, yeah.

I sad Mac can I have 24 hours to think this over? he said you can have til tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock to call me back. he gave me his number and I said okay, so I went on home and talked to Joanne. I said, I was ready to do this.

Jean: Do they guarantee employment?

Bill: No. The maximum you can stay is three years. Shriver won't have anybody on the staff over three years down there.

Volunteers can stay for two years, they can -- up for a year, then the are out. Al had gone for a year - no one term, one training period and they were up against a bunch of volunteers coming in and having no staff. So, okay, to make a long story short, Joanne was all for it. She was idealistically inclined, she loved the idea, she'd read more of it than I had, she said to me, do it. I said Joanne.

Jean: What about stability?

Bill: Yeah, the kids and living quarters. She said that'll take care of itself. Go call Macnamura. I said, uh, what about my job? My teaching? My retirement? She said that'll take care of itself. Just go tell Ben, he'll get somebody.

Jean: Plus, didn't the school also value the fact that you were asked?

Bill: Oh yeah, Ben, well he was the best superintendent I ever worked for. He reacted like you just suggested. He said, this is an opportunity. don't pass it up. Well survive with the kids. Don't pass it up. You wouldn't find another guy like that in a thousand years. They'd all said, well no Mr. Byrd, here you are its the middle of November and we just can't have this, if you go now, you're through teaching. Nine tenths of the time. Ben said, this is an opportunity, go for it. So I called Mac back and said, Okay I'm getting back as soon as I can, I got a guy that comes up from Eugene that'll take my classes, he lucked out [Dave Sherman] went to Puerto Rico, met Reader, Reader was there for one more term.

Wait, wait, wait, 10 a.m. the next day you called Macnamura Back Went to Washington.

Left that day?

That afternoon. Played touch football on the white house lawn as soon as I got there. i thought, out of their mind, they're nuts, I couldn't even change my clothes, I had leather-soled shoes on. And I lined up, first, the guy that picked me up I didn't know who he was, he said we gotta play the justice department this afternoon. I said what. He said the Peace Corp is playing the justice department on the white house lawn, you know, the journalists,

Jean: Right, that was a big Kennedy thing

Bill: Big kennedy thing. So I got up there are I lined up being this guy and he reaches across the line and he says, Hi, my name's White. I said I'm Bill Byrd from Oregon. He said no kidding, I'm from Colorado. This was Byron White, Justice White of the supreme court, well -- white was an all american football player, he knocked me on my butt real fast,

Jean: That's no fair.

Bill: And Bobby Kennedy was on the other side too. But we beat em. We had Lenny Hart or Clark. Lenny had just played three seasons with the Cleveland Browns. He was calling the shots for

us bunch of idiots.

So anyway, I went to Puerto Rico and met Al, and Al showed me the stuff and the climbing area he'd figured out, and what I was supposed to do and then Al left.

Jean: Why did Al leave?

Bill: He'd had it. Its hot and gooey and not at all like Jackson Hole, or any other mountaineering climate.

Jean: So you basically used what you'd learned from Exum as a guide for the Peace Corp program. Was everybody going to Puerto Rico/

Bill: No it was just one of the training areas. But i was just there only a month and the director came down with a thing called Tropicux Roux which is a disease, some kind of -- gets in to you from the water or jungle and you get very very ill immediately, overnight and I'd been there only a month and through one cycle, this guy got sick right then, they flew him back to washington with Walter Reed and called the next morning and said that Grant Vince says you are to take over. The newest guy on the block, I just came down here to teach a little rock climbing and go home. Then Shriver came down in a chopper and said Where's Byrd? Here I am sir. He said can you run this outfit? I said sure. He said good, and then left. So i became the director of Peace Corp training instantly and stayed there for three years.

Jean: So you must have then developed your own program that went beyond Exum, I mean the climbing.

Bill: Oh my goodness yes, the climbing was only a very small part of the entire training program.

Jean: Were you able to use some of the skills that you had learned working with your clients climbing, did you carry forth those concepts then?

Bill: Absolutely. Within the Outward Bound philosophy, which was a, simply a device using natural environment to test people's character quality and assess ability to work together under stress and so the idea was to keep stress on your people and find out how much they could take, because when you plop them down alone in a place like Rioblanca Venezuela 500 miles from civilization in a hostile environment -- and a person with your color hair would be in real trouble.

Jean: So then you left the Peace Corp and came up here and started the NW Outward Bound?

Bill: Yeah. I went back and guided for Exum one season, that was in the sixties, one summer.

Jean: Did you see any changes in the school?

Bill: Not much.

Jean: Why did you decide to not go back again.

Bill: Well, I started, my goodness, I'm getting mixed up here. I've done too many things. When I got back from the Peace Corp, I did not start the Outward Bound school right away. I came back to Eugene, and I figured then well Joanne and I would have to figure out what I was going to do for a living, go back to teaching, work in administration, what was I going to do. Well, what had actually turned out, I had been two years in law school, and flunked out at the end of my second year, went across campus then got a masters in ed and went to teaching, but then in the meantime all my classmates had become lawyers and ARt Johnson who just happens to live right across the street, Art was in one of the bigger firms and had become a very successful trial lawyer here in town. I wasn't home more than a week when Art called and said come on down to the office. I want t proposition you regarding something. Here is the situation the way it is in Eugene now. He said There's a lot of people, getting hurt in car accidents, getting hurt in logging accidents in the woods, they are suing their employers to recover some money to take care of themselves. And I have no one to help me out on the plaintiffs

side. On the other side is an insurance company, and they have a whole fleet of well-paid lawyers to do their research, to do their trial work, to do their preparation work. I have nobody, except me, and I can't take time to do all this stuff because I have clients coming out of my ears. What I need is a person to do the investigation, to do the research, to screen the people that come in here, to do a system like they have in Britain where you have barristers, and lawyers. I need a barrister. Are you interested? Because you know the law school, you get into the library you can use the library you talk to people. You know, you have the skills, the training. I need someone to do this and you don't have to be licensed as a lawyer, because you are not going to practice in court, you are not going to sign any documents.

I said, well, I'll take a wack at it. How are you going to pay me? And Art said I know the guys that are doing this in Portland, there were only two guys doing this in Portland, and I know what their pay is. And so I started working for Art. We were very successful, Jesus, we really knocked em dead around here. And so two other law firms said said to Art, we're also plaintiffs law firms that do not compete with you, and there won't be a conflict of interest so can Bill work for us too. Pretty soon I had four law firms on retainer and I was busier than hell. It caused a lot of travel. I didn't like being away from the kids. It was really successful. And I think I did that for the next three years. And then I found a state cop — I met a lot of policeman of course in the process — And I met a state cop who was about to retire. And at the same time this guy from down in Portland said, hey, I want to start an Outward Bound school. And I --- So we started the school in 66.

Jean: And you modelled it after other Outward Bound programs.

Bill: Yeah, I got all the stuff from Britain and I got all the stuff from Colorado. Well, Paul and I had taught rock climbing down there once, Paul Petzoldt. Yeah, we set up the rock climbing program for Outward Bound down there in Colorado.

Jean: When was that?

Bill: I had no idea, but it must have been 64.

Jean: So before you did the Peace Corp.

Bill: Yeah.

Jean: So that would make you more qualified then to go to the Peace Corp program.

Bill: Yeah. And then I ran a course for Colorado. You know another picture. Come on in here [we walk into his office]

This is my first course in colorado that we ran out of a little mining town in Ruby, on the continental Divide.

You recognize this [he shows me the Wallstreet ridge on the Exum Route up the Grand Teton]

We look at several more photographs.

Jean: Did you like ice climbing and snow climbing more than rock climbing?

Bill: I like the snow and ice, yeah, I just like to do the whole thing. This is Peace Corp stuff. This is shriver and the infamous John Corcoran who appears in all Washington book, I-told-you -so books. Now this is Golda Maier, who was prime minister of India?

[we discuss where I may have heard Corcoran's name before.]

Bill: Here is Bill Moyers, who is now on PBS

An hour later.

JW: What do you think that your generation of climbers accomplished?

BB: Oh my goodness. I think a lot of bold and innovative climbing

techniques were forged by our group. We started out with the most primitive kind of equipment and graduated into high tech, so its almost like going from the 1920s, the era of radio and dial telephones into the 1990s where everybody has a computer. There is a tremendous difference in technology number one. The other thing I think is, uh, the ethic of my generation, the climbing ethic of my generation, involved more than just the conduct on the mountain. It involved your whole personality. You were either an honorable person everywhere you went, or you weren't an honorable person. Heh, and I think there are too many double standards today, and too many personal agendas behind the facade that we were not at all into.

Jean: It was very genuine.

Bill: Everybody that I knew was. You know we had our genuine commitment to be out of doors. Uh, nobody made any money because we were in the out of doors, really, you know we weren't lawyers, out lobbying or anything like that.

JW: And that is really what Donnie was saying in a way, about the difference between the guides during your period and the climbers with outward bound who want to get paid for their time off.

BB: We were just so happy to be there. Maybe we were a throwback of some sort, but we're also had very responsible positions to go to when we were not guiding or climbing.

JW: So it really wasn't your profession.

BB: No. It was an avocation with me, and I just happened to get into the guiding business. I've always liked working with people, my goodness, I've been a teacher most of my life, so it was a natural for me, assuming you had the natural athletic ability which was required, which I've always had, and uh, were emotionally able to handle the crisis situations which arise inevitably in a high risk enterprise like that. So, I think that the fact that we went through the developing stages of mountaineering in America, and the development of the guide

profession was a kind of safety net that we had, was just phenomenal. And we also pioneered the development of mountain rescue systems. As I said, the park felt responsible for what happened in the mountains but they didn't have any ability to do anything about it until we came along and started training a ranger corp so they could put together a mountain rescue unit actually operated, run and governed by the Park service, and they didn't have to go around begging for volunteers and so on, and so I suppose we started a profession mountain rescue --

JW: What do you see as Glenn's role in relation to American mountaineering. As a mountaineer, how do you regard Glenn?

BB: Well Glenn was a competent mountaineer, and he was an excellent rock climber but very seldom exercised his skills. Glenn never seemed to be to me eager to climb anything. And when he was out there on the rock, he was fairly tense, he was confident, he was a good leader, uh, but I never saw Glenn relaxed on the mountain. He was not only highly respectable on the mountain, I think he was in awe of the whole business. Contrasting that with a guy like Unsoeld, uh, and Emerson, now there's the consummate climber, oh god, Dick was an absolute marvel.

JW I'm talking with pat.

Bill: Oh are you, oh great patty and I gosh we've had some gorgeous times together. Well, Dick and I did a lot of the pioneering of a lot of the higher big routes back there, and my name won't be in the book because everytime we went on the Northeast face of Teewinot, or the South Buttress of Mt Moran, any of those biggies, Emerson and I always started, and Emerson and somebody else always finished. See, Dick was never a guide, Dick was always a ranger on the gate duty or something, and he would sit around on the gates during slack time and plan routes up the peaks. The guy was phenomenal for sporting routes, Emerson could find a route up anything. And the rest of us, a lot of us would stand around and look, and look and look and we couldn't see any route up the north face of teewinot, and Dick would stand there and say yeah see.

The same way with the south Buttress. I never even thought of going up Leigh Canyon. And, but Emerson and I would get up there and we'd both fall off of something and we'd learn a lot. And then the next time he'd have off I wouldn't be off and then he'd go up with Decker or Ortenberger or somebody like that and they'd do it. It was just funny. I didn't even notice that for a couple of years until Lee would come around and update his guidebook, and Ortenberger, Oakie as we'd call him would say Byrd you lazy bastard you don't have your name on anything, and I'd say now Ortenberger you know better than that, god dammit, you've been in here when Emerson and I have come in all bloody off of these climbs, and you or Decker get to go up the next time and do it because we know what to take next time in terms of equipment and stuff and it never even occurred to me

JW That you had aced yourself out of all the first ascents

BB yeah I was also just always so much fun being there, you know to be climbing with Emerson was just an absolute joy. The guy was terrible in terms of his physical conditions. He'd teach all winter and do nothing and he'd come out into the park and be in just lousy physical shape and he'd stagger around the first two or three climbs but when Em got in shape by August, he was the most beautiful guy to watch move on the rock I have ever seen. It was like going to the Ballet and watching Nureyev. He was smother than any of the other climbers by far, the only guy who even came close to Emerson in technique was probably Corbet, because they were built about the same, big and rangy, and Barry was very strong. He was also bright as hell and very innovative in his climbing, Barry was. Barry and Emerson were very similar, I thought. Jake was a little power climber, and a damn good one. Pownall was a tremendously physical power climber. Willie just went up there and let things happen. He would take clients on a new route, which scared the hell out of Exum.

Jean: I thought he wasn't very good at route finding.

Bill: Well, he'd get lost, he'd start up some so-called standard

route and end up with a new route. You had to know Unsoeld to figure out if he had done it on purpose or if he had just gotten lost, cause Unsoeld was the type of a guy, Unsoeld was a complete practical climber. If he assessed that his party could handle something more difficult than the climb they were supposed to do, like say he'd gone the south face of Mt. Owen which is a routine walk up. Willie would look at the thing on the way up and say, [in gruff voice] I wonder if we could make that Couloir to the left, I think we'll try it. And he'd drag these people up it. And if he ran into something he couldn't handle, he'd just rappel off it and go up the regular way like he was supposed to have done in the first place, and everybody'd be happy with the climb, you know, they didn't know the difference. He'd just con them into thinking they were part of a whole new route, and had had an impossibly marvelous experience, and they'd just be blasted physically, you know, sitting around drawing their last breaths thinking, yeah, yeah, yeah, it was really, great [voice trails off]

Jean: What was the mountain you were telling me you had climbed and then you ended up on the top of the wrong mountain?

Bill: Oh! Hah, hah. It was the very first climb. Petzoldt had told Glenn what a great climber I was and so Glenn, typical of Exum you know he wouldn't take Petzoldt's word for anything, uh, so he the first time he assigned me was a couple of people who were primarily photographers and they didn't want any serious rock climbing but they wanted to get up high so he said well Bill will take you up the South Teton, and that will put you in Cirque of the Towers and you can see the cathedral group and that's a good choice.

So we started going up garnet Canyon and you know I had never paid any attention to the south Teton before. I just you know, it was there, and so I started over and I get up on the top of this thing and here I am on top of Cloud Veil Dome, right next to the South, you know its Nez Perce.

Jean: What did your clients say?

Bill: Oh, they were just happy as hell to be up there. Its actually a better place to photograph from than the south is, because the south puts you in line so that the middle and the grand are in line, whereas in Cloud Veil you can see both.

Jean: So did you tell them both what had happened?

Bill: I told Glenn about it and he just laughed. Paul's brother Eldon, oh god what a character Eldon was, he did the same thing. he'd guided for Paul a couple of times, and paul sent him with a bunch up to the middle, and Eldon got up to the Col between the middle and the South, and got confused and climbed the south with these people who were supposed to do the middle. And he got back down to the col between the two and said to these people, Well, you go on back to the canyon yourself because he'd figured if they got down and told them they had been on the south instead of the middle Paul'd kick the shit out of him so he took off and went down to Idaho the other way, he went down to Rexburg. Eldon, did yeah, and didn't come back for about a month. Well Paul didn't really care, as long as they had had a good climb, he didn't care whether they had got were they were supposed to go.

JW: Do you see Glenn's role as a major one in terms of American Mountaineering, or the guide school.

BB: Yeah, I do. Glenn influenced all of us in a conservative way because most of us were really too eager, for guiding. You have to remember for guiding now. WE had to consciously separate what we did as individuals. Like when Emerson and I and Willie and I when we climbed together you know we had a completely different outlook on what we were doing, and, well you are with equals, too, which is not true of the guiding. So Glenn, I don't say his influence was tremendous in the total climbing picture, no because he didn't do anything like that very much, he did that Exum ridge thing, period. That was the end, that was the last thing he did that was at all out of the ordinary.

Jean: And it doesn't sound like he really wanted to got out.

Bill: And he stumbled into that. So, but I think in terms of the development of the American Guide system, Glenn Exum, uh, I don't think there's anybody that had more influence and the development of a guiding attitude and the development of the techniques to safely do it as distinguished from going on a climb of your own with buddies. I think Glenn's greatest influence there in keeping mountaineering safe, developing the systems and the techniques for guiding people safely to the tops of these crazy mountains. I think he's had a real important influence that way, but very subtle. Glenn's not an extrovert. And as I say, he was a great mediator among a bunch of pretty high powered guys as we all forged this American climbing technique, and that was Glenn's greatest role, I think, mediating a bunch of climbing idiots. And came up with something safe and sane.

JW so it was a silent role tat wasn't obvious.

Bill: Yeah, a mediating role. Glenn took some really strong positions on things, and they generally proved to be right, even though we had some rather violent arguments at the time.

Jean: Did you argue with him? [relate story about my class with Pete Lev, where he used the bowline knot around the waist, not using harnesses.

Bill: Your mentioning harnesses is a good point. because it makes me think, see, techniques were constantly being approved during this time, and Glenn was, he made the new techniques prove themselves before he allowed us to do them there at the Guide's shed. Glenn's primary thinking I think was to keep things as simple as possible for people to get up and down safely, cause he had a better read on our clientele really than we did. We were still too enthralled with the mountain and the stuff that could be done out there, yeah

Jean: And plus you had your own ability level

Bill: And we had our own ability levels that we constantly had to keep under control with a guided party. And Glenn's influence

there was incredible. I think we'd a had accidents a dime a dozen, and probably the park service would have shut it down entirely, climbing as a sport, if it hadn't been for Glenn Exum. I really think that is true. I know, uh, and I agree with Glenn a hundred percent on this, when the harnesses started coming in, and these elaborate rappel schemes started coming in, Glenn said no, we are going to do the old figure 8 C and we are going to use the D ring caribiner, and we are going to do an over the shoulder rappel because its simple.

Jean: The Doeuffle body rappel?

Bill: Yes, its a simple way to rappel. Its effective and its fast if you want to go fast its slow if you want to go slow, and you don't have all these gadgets that could fail, you know we've had more rappelling accidents since these screw-ball techniques were developed than we've ever had before.

Jean: People also get mixed up.

Bill: yeah, there are too many things to think of. And when you have people up there who are worried first about the exposure and the height and the uncertainty, and the holds and their feet and their shoes, you can't confront them with a bunch of god damned apparatus. You can't predict what they are going to do. And if they panic halfway down, you've got a real mess with a cloud coming in from the west, a little lightening. But if you keep it simple, and teach em how to rappel thoroughly at basic climbing school there's no reason to go into all that crap, it doesn't provide any safety, its just confusing as hell, and when you get in a mess, even a kink in the rope, then you got two hours of work to do, and in that two hour period of time, your starting down that mountain at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and the four o'clock thunderstorm is coming in, and you are on ridge, and the lightening is looking for a place to go and you are stuck with some yoyo with a kink in the rope and fourteen caribiners. You know, forget it.

Jean: Have you ever had problems with lightening in the mountain.

Bill: Oh Jesus, I guess, yeah you bet. I had one climb where I had just got to the top of the friction pitch to the belay spot, and fortunately you know we used to have pitons in there, they were in there forever but we never used them, but on this particular time I had my wool cap on so I could feel the static electricity, I knew we were going to get blasted. So I snapped in, got around into the belay position and I yelled around to my partner to start on up and I got two people up and Doc Lee, whose name will crop up, I don't know if you've heard of him, Doc Lee is a guy who went with the guides every once in a while. He hopped around unroped all the time.

He's from Eugene, he climbed with us, he was a fantastic climber. Very careful and very, very good. Well Norman was with me that day, he knew what was happening so he was hustling people up as much as you can, and coming up behind him and helping with holds and stuff, scrambling up to keep them off the friction pitch, cause up above there was that ledge, you know that you can get on, and straighten people out and even if you'd got hit nobody'd roll off.

Well Norman, hah, Norman was on right above the slick place on the friction pitch, and he was helping a person locate their feet when the bolt struck right in the middle of the rope. The rope parted, it fried the rope, so I had, the last thing I saw, I mean it came down between me and them, a great orange thing and this incredible crash. St. Elmo's fire went all the way down, it singed people, people had no eyebrows when they came up, and stuff like that, and it parted the rope and when I looked down, you know I thought I'd lost two people, I looked down and the person Norm was helping was still there in the same position and Norman was gone, and I thought, that can't be it couldn't have gotten Norman, it might have gotten the client, but it can't have gotten Norman. Well you know what rope I had left, I had some that I'd taken up and I had an end, a burnt end here. So, I hollered down to this person I said, hey Don, you are just fine right where you are, just keep the same holds that you've got, the same feet, don't move anything and I'll get a line down to you, so I tossed the line down, of course he couldn't let go to tie in.

I just used the rope as a rappel line, went down and tied in, and then I just put one hand over hand to the top back up to my belay seat and rappelled him up. It was pouring down rain and the time and starting to snow, and I still didn't know what the hell'd happened to Norman, couldn't see him anywhere, the people down below hadn't seen him. So I got the party up and we still hadn't seen Norman, I thought geez he can't have fallen off. Pretty soon he came up the gully right next to the Exum ridge over toward the Underhill. He was in the gully, the couloir. Norman, what the hell are you doing down there? He woke up down there! He got blasted off the ridge and he must have gone thirty to fifty feet in the air and lit in that couloir. And the only thing he'd had was, he'd hit his chin on a rock, his chin was split open and he'd lit on a sharp rock and he had a little puncture wound in his chest here and he'd hit his knees kind of hard, he lit face first in the gully. It's the damndest experience I'd ever had up there.

Jean: Do you remember the Ford accident.

Bill: Fred? Oh sure.

Jean: Was that the first fatality that the school had.

Bill: Yeah, the first time they ever had a guide killed. Yeah, Fred was a careful guide, but you start to head around a long time, and that was one incredible rescue too, There's another place where Emerson was so good. Unsoeld was good too. I mean, these guys are so innovative they could look at a place and say, yeah, this this this and this, and we're doing it.

Jean: Really good at assessing?

Bill: Yeah, and setting it up with whatever we had to work with, because back in those days it was ropes, pitons and --?

Jean: They had tied him in with a knot and left to take the clients back

[Byrd doesn't know specifics of rescue]

Jean: When did Exum lose any clients?

Bill: Talk to Al. There was an accident on, what is the name of that, cube point, ask Al about that. I think it was Al's party, I'm not sure.

Jean: do you know anything about the guide's school as it exists now?

Bill: No, I just check in with the guides when I went back to climb with Tara, and they said go ahead and use the hut on the lower saddle. And Pete was having some hassle with the Park at the time we were out about sanitation. Five or six years ago. You know the other thing that uh, I came back from Europe and I'd seen the hut system, and I thought you know that is a perfect solution to the lower saddle mess. And I had an architect friend here in town who was also a climber and so he came back to the Tetons went up to the lower saddle with me and went back and he drew up plans for a stone hut on the lower saddle that could not be seen from anywhere except the lower saddle, all materials there, all we had to do was lug up the mortar and put it together, and Glenn wouldn't back it, at least that's what we found out after the fact, and that pissed me rather royally at the time, because that damn business that they've got up there now and everything they've ever had up there was a mess, people can't sleep. But the stone hut would have solved the problem. Got all the materials laying around. It would have been environmentally, the objective right on.

Jean: Would the park have approved?

Bill: I don't know.

Jean: You had tents before you had those little tin things. And you just kept them up all summer?

Bill: Yeah, and we had those, oh what do you call it, Breitenbach and I loved those, what do you call it, quansit huts up there. You

want to see something funny. Jake was a small man, strong as hell, but in stature Jake was like 5' 4" You know, wiry as hell. Excellent climber

Jean: Kind of like Yvon?

Bill: Yeah, yeah.

Well Jake and I started up. You know those quansit hut pieces on a pack board, you know, god you know they were four feet over your head, these big wind scoops and you know what its like on the middle Teton Moraine, you know the wind blows like hell. Well Jake and I were walking up there with this damn load. I had dynamite and stuff to blow the garbage pit and stuff. And all the bolts and craft, and Jake was carrying these two gigantic quansit hut pieces. And we got up there and the wind started to blow hard, in gusts, and Jake fell over. And I started kidding him, I says Breitenbach you are gonna end up there out there in the goddamned snow field, I'll bet. And sure as hell we were about to the fixed ropes, we were maybe a hundred feet from the fixed ropes and this gust hit us, knocked me over, and I rolled over on a rock and turned around and here was Jake, gliding, absolutely airborne, with those darn things, and he lit out there on the snowfield [laughter] and I got out of my pack I knew, I figured he wasn't hurt, and he wasn't, but he was like a beetle on his back, he couldn't do anything. And he was sitting out there on the snow field and he started to go. Well, he would have landed up in the bowl, he wouldn't have gone over any edges or anything, but you know he fell, he couldn't get out of the damn thing.

Jean: Is there anything else you'd like to add. The book is really the story of the development of American Mountaineering through Glenn's life.

Bill: Well the thing other thing about Glenn you have to realize is that he was not zeroed in solely on mountaineering. Here is an outdoors sportsman as well. Glenn and I spent hours fishing together over on the snake. We loved to go there after a climb, we'd get cleaned up and get your ride and ride over there, catch a

bunch of fish for dinner and come back. So Glenn knew how to relax and some of the other guides did not.

Jean: He knew how to be balanced.

Bill: Yeah, I think that's a good word for Exum. he was a much more balanced individual than a lot of us were. A lot of us had a target [mumble, mumble]. and were somewhat fanatical about it. Whereas Glenn was very balanced in his outlook on things, and that was a really good influence for us at the time, at our stage of development both as mountaineers and as people. The two of them worked together well, Beth and Glenn and they had to, in that tight knit bunch of --- I think we got madder at Beth than we ever did at Glenn.

Jean: Was she a scapegoat?

Bill: Well, she took the heat, because Beth for a long time was solely responsible for the schedule. Whenever that is your job, your gonna get it, playing favorites and the whole thing, the rumour mill, until they decided to appoint a chief guide to take some of the heat off Beth and that was me. So you know, they were a good combination.

I'll probably think some very stupendous thought after you are gone.

I'll probably think up some stupendous question and then be gone, so I may end up writing you. I really appreciate the time, I know this took longer, but I didn't know you were such a great storyteller.

[We discuss the Petersons, people Jean rents from in Meadow Road just south of Moose]

Bill: My impression of Jackson was the people I met there were all drinkers, god they all drank like crazy, I'd never met

Jean: Oldtimers. The original transplanted easterners. Ginny Huidikuper,

Bill: Oh god, shes wild.

Heidi and Jim her husband. Betty Woolsey and her whole tribe.
John and Georgie Morgan.

[Discuss Lisa Morgan.] Yeah, Lisa went into the Sawtooth with us.
a buddy of my daughter Susan.

[Discusses climbing with children, whitewater boating, rafting
kayaking, kayak schools, how to get to freeway]